

[Subscribe](#)[Past Issues](#)[Translate ▾](#)

# CONFERENCE *connection*

Alabama · Georgia  
Mississippi · South Carolina · Tennessee · NW Florida

SOUTHEAST CONFERENCE, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

October 1, 2020

## News from the Conference Office

### Seeking Nominations for the Conference Minister Search Committee

Do you have a passion for the future of the Southeast Conference? This might be an opportunity for you (or someone you know)! On September 26 the Annual Meeting delegates voted to proceed with calling a full-time settled Conference Minister. This will require a Committee of 8-9 individuals representing the diversity of the Southeast Conference who will work through a process to consider potential candidates. Beginning with orientation on Nov. 14, the expectation is for the Committee to have a candidate to present to the Annual Meeting in June 18-19, 2021. [Click here to go to the website page](#) with Search Committee Position Description, Timeline and Nomination Form. **Deadline to submit Nomination Forms is October 10.**



## The Conference Elects New Moderator & Vice Moderator

At the recent Annual Meeting, the delegates elected Ugena Whitlock (photo left) as Moderator of the Conference. Ugena is a member of Pilgrimage UCC, Marietta GA and is the Department Chair of Educational Leadership and Professor of Curriculum & Instruction at Kennesaw State University. Ugena is also a Member in Discernment and has served this past year as the Vice Moderator of the Board. Rev. Myrtle Johnson (photo right) was elected as the Vice Moderator of the Board. She serves as the Associate Pastor at Evergreen Congregational UCC (Beachton), Thomasville, GA and is a 3rd grade Virtual School teacher for the Florida Virtual School Academy, having spent 40 years in public education.

In addition, the following individuals were elected to serve on the Board of Directors for a two year term: Rev. Richard Barham, Nominating Chair, (Spirit of the Cross, Huntsville, AL); Penny Hensley (Phoenix Christian Church, Wildersville, TN); At Large Members - Rev. Ginnie Ferrell (First Congregational UCC, Atlanta, GA); Hannah Mays (United Church of Cookeville, Cookeville, TN); and Rev. Raymonda Speller (Community Congregational UCC, Montgomery, AL). Congratulations to our new members of the Board.

Other elections: General Synod delegates: Grant Carodine (Spirit of the Cross UCC, Huntsville, AL), Jada Hart (Peace Congregational Church, Clemson, SC), Tyler Ung (Circular Congregational Church, Charleston, SC), and Rev. Edie Colf (Brookmeade Congregational, Nashville, TN).

Conference Nominating Committee: Cindy Crocker (Safe Harbor Family Church, Clinton, Mississippi); Ralph Thompson (Howard Congregational

UCC, Nashville, TN); Jody Usher (Peace Congregational , Clemson, SC).

A complete list of individuals in elected positions is located on our Conference website.

---

## Conference Annual Meeting – Thank you!

On September 26, 138 lay and clergy delegates participated in our first Virtual Annual Meeting, with additional visitors observing via YouTube Live. There was a wonderful spirit of community! Voting via polls added a new experience for many. There are many people that made it all possible. We are greatly appreciative of our Tech Stewards that help with issues of technology: Eddie Colf (Brookmeade Congregational UCC, Nashville, TN); Heather Fosburgh (Associate Conference Minister for SEC); Don Harris (SEC Communications Director); Katelyn O'Dunne (Kirkwood UCC, Atlanta, GA); Tyler Ung (Circular Congregational UCC, Charleston, SC); and Dodd Waters (Covenant Community Church, Birmingham, AL). There were also members of the Board of Directors who assisted with presentations, monitored the chat comments and obtained votes that could not be recorded via the polls: Richard Barham (Spirit of the Cross, Huntsville, AL); Heith Battles (Covenant Community Church, Birmingham, AL); Ginnie Ferrell (First Congregational UCC, Atlanta, GA); Penny Hensley (Phoenix Christian Church, Wildersville, TN); Juanita Simmons (Victory for the World Church, Stone Mountain, GA); Gavin Warren (Holy Trinity Community Church, Nashville, TN); Ugena Whitlock (Pilgrimage UCC, Marietta, GA). Thank you also to Rev. Shannon Michael Pater (Central Congregational UCC, Atlanta, GA, and living in India) for serving as Parliamentarian. In addition, an extra thank you to Rev. J.R. Finney II for moderating the meeting and serving as the Moderator for the past four years.

Unfortunately, we had a technical problem with viewing the Opening Worship (which can now be viewed online). Thank you to those involved in worship: Ava Blackwell (Midway Congregational, Midway, GA); Eddie Colf (Brookmeade Congregational, Nashville, TN); Larry Evans (Midway Congregational, Midway, GA); Merianna Harrelson (Garden of Grace, Columbia, SC); Dana Harris (Trinity Congregational, Athens, AL); Courtney Jones (Pilgrimage UCC, Marietta, GA); Haley Lerner (Kirkwood UCC, Atlanta, GA); Carrole Moss (Victory for the World Church, Stone Mountain, GA); Barbara Myers (United Church of Cookeville, Cookeville TN); Shelli Poe (Safe Harbor Family Church, Clinton, MS); Ray Speller (Community Congregational, Montgomery, AL).A special thanks to the choir of Victory for the World Church and Minister Phillip Hill, the Director of Music who wrote and performed 2 original compositions.

## Watch the Annual Meeting Opening Worship and Business Meeting: Both are located at [www.secucc.org/youtube](https://www.secucc.org/youtube).

---

### Reminder about Grant Availability

by *Min. Carrole Moss, Generosity Coordinator*

Transforming Churches Transforming Lives grants season is here. The deadline for submitting your application is October 20th, 2020. Should you have questions or concerns, please follow the [instructions on our website](#) or feel free to reach out to me directly. I look forward to working with all of you. Stay safe and be blessed. Blessings, as we continue to journey...

---

### Communities of Practice: A New Program for Clergy

Fall is a great time to consider new habits – including support for your ministry! Specialized Ministers and Local Church Pastors can benefit from these covenantal groups that provide support and accountability while encouraging good habits and professional growth. Small groups (5-6) with a trained facilitator offer a place to share resources, experiences, and encouragement in a confidential setting.

Whether you are new to ministry, new to the UCC, or have years of experience these groups are for you! The testimonies of those involved in Communities of Practice continue to praise the impact that groups have had on the personal and professional life of ministers. An [article on our website](#) provides more information about Communities of Practice and the possibility of becoming a facilitator or contact Char Burch at [cburch@secucc.org](mailto:cburch@secucc.org).

---

### A Reminder from the Commission on Ministry

The temperature has dropped and it is beginning to feel like Fall. Apples and pumpkins are everywhere and we know that summer has gone for another year. Our minds turn to budgets and fiscal health at this time of the year in the church. We know this is a tough year and that many of us will be finding it harder to get the budget to balance. When this happens, we must look at cutting expenses. It is always tempting to think that since the salary of our pastor is the largest expense maybe it should be cut or at least not increased this year.

As the support and nurture representative on the Commission on Ministry I

hope you will look elsewhere. Our pastors really have been going out of their comfort zone during COVID19. They have been very creative in all aspects of ministry and constantly looking for ways to help and comfort those hurting during this period. If you wonder what a pastor's compensation should be, we can offer you guidelines. Our Southeast Conference website contains a [chart on Clergy Compensation](#) which gives you the size of the congregation and the years of service guide to compensation is available and updated every two years. Blessings as you do your work this year.

Clarice Mitchell, Commission on Ministry

---

## Recognizing Mental Health Issues During the Pandemic

**Tuesday, October 13; 7 pm Eastern/6 pm Central**

We hear many concerns expressed about Mental Health during these days of dealing with COVID-19. But when we are only communicating via zoom and phone, how do we recognize the signs that there may be mental health issues and what do we do about it?

Clergy and Lay Leaders are encouraged to join this discussion with panelists: Rev. Anita Hauenstein - Licensed Psychologist and "spiritual psychologist" who maintains a Private Practice in Nashville, TN; Rev. Dr. Bryan Jones, Licensed Professional Counselor and Mental Health Staff Chaplain for the Atlanta Veterans Administration Healthcare System; and Phyllis Mark, Psy.D., Licensed, Clinical Psychologist in Birmingham, AL.  
[Register Online Here.](#)

---

## Clergy Zoom Connections for September

- **Celebrating Advent/Christmas in the Pandemic**

Tuesday, October 13 - 11:00 a.m. Eastern (10:00 a.m. Central)

Celebration of Advent and Christmas will be different this year! Many clergy are already considering options. Join us as we share ideas with one another.

Zoom: <https://zoom.us/j/479440102>

- **An Hour of Conversations and Prayer**

Tuesdays, October 6, 20, 27 - 11:00 a.m. Eastern (10:00 a.m. Central)

Zoom: <https://zoom.us/j/479440102>

- **Especially for Specialized Ministers**

Tuesday, October 27 - 9:30 a.m. Eastern (8:30 a.m. Central)

Zoom: <https://zoom.us/j/354744689>

- **Live Harp Meditations for Ministers - NEW TIME!**

Thursday, October 22 - 12:00 p.m. Eastern (11:00 Central)

20 minutes of meditation with Celtic harp. Silent prayer and reflection following if desired, facilitated by Rev. Jean Norton. (For questions or to sign up for individual Therapeutic Harp Sessions, contact Jean at [HeartSongJean@gmail.com](mailto:HeartSongJean@gmail.com).)

Zoom: <https://zoom.us/j/96976838422>

- **Maintaining Good Mental Health for Clergy**

Thursday, October 22 – 4 pm Eastern/3 pm Central

Rev. Sarah Lund, UCC Minister for Disabilities and Mental Health Justice will join us for a conversation about keeping focused and taking care of ourselves through these challenging times. [Register Online Here.](#)

---

## Re-Opening of Churches – Conversation for all Church Leaders

**Mondays, October 5 and 19, 7 pm Eastern/6 pm Central**

As things keep changing regarding COVID-19 and reopening churches, we want to continue the conversation, developing safe and best practices. There is also the question about what churches might maintain into the future. We invite all Moderators, Church Leaders, and Clergy to be part of the conversation. [Register online here.](#)

---



## Prayer List

We are continuing the process of praying for authorized ministers,

congregations, and ministry groups throughout 2020. We encourage you to include these prayer requests in your local church newsletter, share them with your prayer circle, and include them in your own prayers.

### Week of October 4

- Holy Trinity Community Church; Nashville, Tennessee
- Martha Sue Carter
- Joseph Ingle
- Kenneth Samuel
- Clarice Mitchell
- Jane Acuff

### Week of October 11

- Peace Congregational UCC; Clemson, South Carolina
- Julius Jessup Peterson
- Jennifer Sanders
- Lyle Weible
- Nancy Elsenheimer
- Salome As-Salaam

## Prayer Requests

We are saddened to receive the news that two of our retired ministers passed away this week.

**Rev. Gerald Kummer** passed away on September 29. Ordained in 1953, Jerry retired to Uplands Village, Pleasant Hill, TN in 1995 after serving churches in New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Kentucky, and Ohio. Although he moved in 2019 to be close to family in Lexington, KY, he remained a member of Pleasant Hill Community Church, Pleasant Hill, TN. Jerry is survived by his wife, Rita Kummer and other family.

**Rev. Willard Rabert** passed away on September 29 at Uplands Village, Pleasant Hill, TN where he lived since retiring in 1996. Ordained in 1959, Will served churches in the Penn Northeast and Penn Central Conferences. He was a member of Pleasant Hill Community Church, Pleasant Hill, TN. Will is survived by his wife, Martha Rabert and other family.

We keep **Rev. Brice Thomas** in prayer as he continues healing at home from a heart attack and heart cardio procedures.

## Celebrations

We congratulate **Haley Lerner** on the passing of her Ecclesiastical Council.

She will be ordained at Kirkwood UCC (date to be announced).

## Pastoral Transitions

Brookmeade Congregational UCC, Nashville has called Licensed **Pastor Becca Griffin** and **Rev. Beverly Ross** as their new Pastoral Team.

On Sunday, October 5, **Rev. Scott Cox** begins as the senior pastor of Central Congregational UCC, Atlanta. Rev. Cox is moving from Speedway Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Indianapolis, IN.

## Churches in Transition

First Congregational, Savannah GA; Trinity Congregational, Athens AL; Open Table, Mobile AL; Rush Memorial, Atlanta GA; United Church of Cookeville, Cookeville TN; Pilgrim Congregational UCC, Chattanooga TN

## News from the Wider Church



## Neighbors in Need Offering for 2020

**Neighbors in Need (NIN)** is a special mission offering of the United Church of Christ that supports ministries of justice and compassion throughout the

United States. One-third of NIN funds support the [Council for American Indian Ministry](#) (CAIM). Two-thirds of this offering is used by the UCC's Justice and Witness Ministries (JWM) to support a variety of justice initiatives, advocacy efforts, and direct service projects through grants. Neighbors in Need grants are awarded to UCC churches and organizations doing justice work in their communities. These grants fund projects whose work ranges from direct service to community organizing and advocacy to address systemic injustice. This year, special consideration will be given to projects focusing on serving our immigrant neighbors and communities. Most UCC congregations will receive the NIN offering on **October 4, 2020** as part of their **World Communion Sunday** observance. However, some local churches select another date.

---

## Ministers' Financial Vitality Initiative

The Pension Boards would like to call your attention to two ways they are helping ease the financial stresses of authorized UCC clergy. The [Ministers' Financial Vitality Initiative](#), launched in 2017 with a \$1 million grant from the Lilly Endowment, is designed to increase and improve financial wellness among UCC authorized ministers. It consists of two programs.

Program One is a three-year, online program of financial education, with financial incentives totaling \$10,000, spread throughout the three-year program, and includes the opening of a retirement account in the Annuity Plan for the participant, if one is not already established.

Thanks to an additional \$1 million expansion grant received in late 2019 from Lilly, Program One will expand from 30 to 60 ministers in each cohort, starting with the next round of participants, who will begin their work in January 2021. Any authorized UCC minister serving in a ministry setting (local church, chaplaincy, or other specialized ministry) may apply.

The application deadline for Program One is October 15. We encourage you to apply, if you are eligible, or to share this information with someone you know who may be interested in applying. [Click here to begin your application.](#)

Program Two offers grants of up to \$1,000 to UCC local church pastors whose employing church or Conference/Association raises a matching amount. [Applications for Program Two are accepted on a rolling basis.](#) We encourage you to apply, if eligible, and to encourage the clergy you know to apply.

Participants in MFVI may also be eligible for low-interest rate loan financing

through Generations Financial Resources. (Please scroll down to the article, Generations Financial Resources: A New Service for MFVI Participants). If you have any questions about MFVI, contact us at [info@genserv.org](mailto:info@genserv.org).

## News from our Local Congregations



CIRCULAR CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH  
FALL LECTURES IN THEOLOGY & ETHICS  
*presents*



# PASTOR AMY BUTLER

.....

# WHEN GOD GETS POLITICAL

**7:00 PM, WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 7**

**When God Gets Political** - From creation to exodus, exile to homecoming, Jesus to the early church, it's clear that God is, in fact, very interested in the way we order our common life.

**7:00 PM, THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8**

**When We Get Political** - What is our calling as people of faith in an increasingly polarized country? How do we get political in a way that mirrors God's best hopes for our common life?

## LIVESTREAMED LECTURES FOLLOWED BY Q & A



[facebook.com/circularchurch](https://facebook.com/circularchurch)

[youtube.com/circularcongregationalchurch](https://youtube.com/circularcongregationalchurch)

## Trainings and Conferences

### Energizing the South for Energy Justice Summit

Thursday, October 22 11 am - -4 pm Eastern/10 am – 3 pm Central  
Friday, October 23 9 am -2 pm Eastern/ 8 am – 1 pm Central

Communities in the South are experiencing a very real threat of utility shutoffs and evictions. People are being left unprotected. The UCC has a history of being pioneers against environmental injustice. This is an environmental injustice! In addition, there are no alternatives because people are robbed of choice and resources. This is energy injustice. We are looking for faithful people throughout the Southeast Conference who will join us in building this movement for energy justice for our most vulnerable among us and to join us for two days of education and inspiration. We will learn of the injustices around energy while inspiring you to advocate for energy justice. Help us in alleviating economic oppression, inequity, and environmental justice by registering today for our Energizing the South for Energy Justice Summit.

There is no cost to attend. The first 20 authorized UCC ministers to register will receive a \$30 gift card to pay for lunch for the days of training. This is partly funded through a grant from the UCC Brown Endowment Fund for Clergy Continuing Education. Questions can be directed to Rev. Michael Malcom: [revmalcom@thepeoplesjusticecouncil.org](mailto:revmalcom@thepeoplesjusticecouncil.org).

Register Here: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/energizing-the-south-tickets-122101213015>

---



## **UCC Retired Servants "Zoom" Gathering on October 6**

You are invited to join a Zoom conference call on Tuesday, October 6, 2020, at 7 pm EST of past and aspiring UCC Retired Servants of Southern Conference and Southeast Conference of the United Church of Christ. Since we will not be meeting in person this October at Blowing Rock Conference Center, we are making available this Zoom conference call thru BRCC and the Planning Committee for this year. [More details are on our website.](#)

---

## Fall ONA Webinar Series Available

The UCC Open and Affirming Coalition's popular webinar series resumes on Thursday, Oct. 8, with "ONA 201: Best Practices for Growing ONA Churches." The series continues with "ONA 101" and "1-to-1 Conversations about ONA"—both indispensable resources for not-yet ONA congregations. No matter where you are on your ONA journey, there's a webinar for you! Look for discounted season passes and reduced rates for multiple participants. And please contact us if you'd like to schedule a special webinar or consulting session for your congregation! [View the list of webinars on the ONA website.](#)

## Conference Calendar

### [Re-Opening of Churches – Conversation for all Church Leaders](#)

October 5 @ 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm EDT

### [Clergy Conversations via Zoom](#)

October 6 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm EDT

### [Clergy Conversations via Zoom](#)

October 13 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm EDT

### [Recognizing Mental Health Issues During the Pandemic](#)

October 13 @ 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm EDT

### [Re-Opening of Churches – Conversation for all Church Leaders](#)

October 19 @ 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm EDT

### [Clergy Conversations via Zoom](#)

October 20 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm EDT

View the **full calendar** of events online: <https://www.secucc.org/events/>

## Contact Us

Conference Minister: **Rev. Char Burch;** [cburch@secucc.org](mailto:cburch@secucc.org)

Assoc. Conf. Minister: **Rev. Heather Fosburgh;** [hfosburgh@secucc.org](mailto:hfosburgh@secucc.org)

Generosity Coordinator: **Min. Carrole Moss;** [cmoss@secucc.org](mailto:cmoss@secucc.org)

Director of Communications: **Don Harris**; [dharris@secucc.org](mailto:dharris@secucc.org)

*Copyright © 2020 Southeast Conference, UCC, All rights reserved.*

Want to change how you receive these emails?  
You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#).

